

Seniors face dilemma between ditch day and athletics

Attendance required to participate in sports, and ditch day is no exception

by Matthew Murray

Many senior students abstained from Senior Ditch Day on May 3 due to an athletic policy that required their attendance in school that day.

The policy requires students to attend school from fourth period until the end of the day in order to be eligible to participate in athletics.

Although attaining athletic eligibility is not a problem for students on most days, seniors participating in spring sports were faced with a difficult decision on May 3: enjoy the tradition of Ditch Day or honor their commitment to their athletic teams.

"When you join track, or any other team, there is an assumption of commitment," said senior Daniel Hess. "While it can suck to miss something that all of your friends get to do, compared with all the positives of being on the team, [missing ditch day was] totally worth it."

Hess, a member of the boys varsity track and field team, originally planned to participate in Ditch Day, but opted to attend school after learning of the policy. Hess's choice to remain in school seemed

to be in consensus with other seniors on the varsity track and field team, due to competing in was the Central Suburban League Conference Meet that night.

The seniors on the girls track and field teams had similar predicaments as they were competing in their respective conference meets on Ditch Day as well. Senior Lauren Russell, one of the few throwers on the varsity team, attended school in order to compete in the meet, but she still felt resentful about her absence from Ditch Day.

"Missing ditch day was definitely not worth throwing in the meet," said Russell. "[I wouldn't] say that track isn't important to me, but I would've much rather ditched with everyone else instead of staying in school on the one day that my parents would've actually let me skip."

Although members of the track and field team felt more inclined to attend school due to the importance of their meet, student-athletes who were still weeks away from their postseason decided to come to school as well.

John Keenan, a senior on the varsity baseball team, opted against ditching in favor of playing a regular season game at Niles North.

Despite the discrepancy in enthusiasm about missing Ditch Day for athletic competition, most student-athletes competing on the



Seniors enjoy a 4-0 Cubs victory as part of ditch day tradition | Instagram

night of May 3 chose to attend the half-day of school rather than be absent during a critical stretch of the spring sports season.

"Most of our athletes, and all of the athletes that I know of, went to that half-day of school so that they could compete that night," said athletic director Augie Fontanetta. "It's very important for the athletes to compete, and, they see a lot of value in that, which is why they came to

school on that particular day."

Seeking the thrill of competing was not just limited to the athletes on teams with competitions on May 3. Many student-athletes who had team practices scheduled after the half-day of school abstained from Senior Ditch Day due to their commitment to their respective teams.

"Personally, I would have really liked to have spent the day with my close friends at the Cubs game, but

I was trying to focus on the bigger picture," said senior Lilly Frentzel. "It would be fun to [have been] in those photos and share those memories [of ditch day] with my friends, but I wasn't willing to risk that for [the chance] of going to state."

Frentzel, as well as all of her senior teammates on the varsity soccer team, skipped Senior Ditch Day in order to remain eligible to practice the day before their game against Lake Forest. Frentzel also remarked that the athletic policy aligns head coach James Burnside's philosophy about the importance of school in relation to athletics.

"I know we have to be in school for more than half the day to participate in practices and games, but [Coach Burnside also] stresses that school always comes before soccer and [the] team takes that very seriously," said Frentzel.

Burnside's stance is not unprecedented. Boys varsity track and field coach Mark Wukas also wholeheartedly supports the policy.

"I tell my track team that if you do not come to school, you will not compete [in the meet]," said Wukas. "My mother always used to say, 'If you're too sick to go to school, then you're too sick to play,' so that's my motto."

Tennis dominates sectionals

Zipoli wins singles, Drier and Wagh win doubles in easy title for Trevs

by Connor Caserio

On Saturday, May 18, New Trier Boys Tennis earned a dominant victory in the first sectional competition held at the new Northfield campus tennis courts.

The Trevians' sectional athletes placed first and second in both the singles and doubles championships, winning the sectional title with a perfect score of 36. Junior Dylan Drier and Sophomore Jay Wagh were the doubles champions, while Senior Jake Zipoli won the singles championship.

"I feel like our team performed very well at sectionals," said Zipoli. "It couldn't have gone any better."

In the doubles completion, Senior Brent Saltzman and Sophomore Colin Fox were runner-ups to Drier and Wagh. Sophomore Max Bengtsson placed second in the singles championship—an injured shoulder prevented him from facing Zipoli in the final.

Bengtsson was also thrilled with how the team performed at sectionals. He pointed to the team's hard work throughout the tennis season as the main factor behind their perfect score.

"The team fought very hard and that we deserved this win with the great season we have had," said Bengtsson.

The rest of the Trevians' sectional athletes echoed Bengtsson's sentiment that sweeping sectionals was the product of their hard work throughout an excellent overall season. Head Boys Varsity Tennis Coach Tad Eckert added that he was impressed with how his team handled Loyola, the other top team at the sectional.

"We didn't play Loyola this year but their doubles teams had great



Senior Jake Zipoli is captured following through on a serve | Stuart Rodgers

tournaments and we had to play well to beat them in both semi-finals," said Eckert.

Fox, on the other hand, thought his match against the Loyola doubles team was fairly easy. He felt he and his partner didn't face a real challenge until they faced their teammates in the finals.

"My partner, Brent Saltzman, and I performed very well before we made the finals as we won 6-0, 6-0 against Loyola and Taft," said Fox. "We eventually lost to our teammates Jay Wagh and Dylan Drier in a very hard fought match in the finals."

Because all six of the Trevians' sectional athletes placed first or second at sectionals, they all qualified to compete at the IHSA State Tennis Tournament. It will be held May 23rd through 25th at tennis courts in northwest suburban School Districts 211, 214, and 220.

Last year, the Trevians placed second behind traditional rival Hinsdale Central. Hinsdale Central's tennis program has won 25 tennis state championships, the most of any Illinois high school. New Trier has the second most state championships with 17.

According to the Winnetka Current, many in the New Trier tennis program think that the Trevians have a real opportunity this year to start catching up to Hinsdale Central in

state championships. Earlier this season, they defeated Hinsdale Central by a not insignificant margin of five matches to two.

In the Current's article about the tennis team, A confident Jay Wagh said "I think we're all pretty set to win state."

Some members of the tennis program have more subdued expectations of how they think the state tournament will play out. "I think our team will do great to close out the season at state," said Zipoli. "I'm not sure what we'll place, but I think we'll definitely come home with a trophy."

Zipoli's outlook on the state tournament is perhaps the more realistic outlook for fans of the Trevians to take. The team will face stiff competition from Hinsdale Central and the other powerhouse programs, Naperville Central and Stevenson.

Nonetheless, if the Trevians go into the state tournament with a determined state of mind, they may well win the state championship.

"Our goal from the beginning of the season was to win the team state championship and by advancing all our entries thru sectionals we still have that shot," said Eckert. "The competition will be tougher, but we are ready."

Badminton sends all six sectional qualifiers to state

Successful season capped off with strong showing at Eastern Illinois U.

by Simren Dadwani

New Trier Girls Badminton team recently went to state at Eastern Illinois University on Friday and Saturday, May 10 and 11, after a victory at the sectional tournament.

For several years, this team has been consistently winning sectionals and then heading to the state tournament.

Six players from the team participated at sectionals. This year, all of them reached state. New Trier was one of 10 teams who had all six players that played at sectionals, qualify for state.

Immediately before going to sectionals, the team had to surpass their first postseason challenge: the conference tournament.

"We ended up winning the tournament, which was a sweet way to end the season," said co-captain Naomi Aisen.

During sectionals, the two New Trier doubles teams placed first and second at the tournament, sweeping the rest of the competition.

"The two NT doubles teams took first and second and played each other for the championship which is always the goal," said Aisen.

At the state tournament, there were two brackets: one for doubles teams and one for singles teams. The double elimination tournament began at 8 am on Friday morning and went through the early evening.

It continued and eventually concluded on Saturday, but only a certain number of successful players make it until then.

"If any member of the team happen to be in the top 32 doubles or

singles teams, then they will play on Saturday morning," said Aisen.

During the tournament, co-captains Tess Fallon and Holly Fessler won two matches and the other doubles team won one.

"My partner and I won two matches and the other doubles team won one but had to forfeit because one of them got injured, which was a bummer for them but things like that happen," said Fallon.

Fallon was also injured for majority of the year and wasn't sure she would be able to play at the state tournament.

"Honestly, I was just grateful to be there. I've had an injury all year and didn't even think I would be able to. But we ended up having an amazing season and state run, so that was awesome," explained Fallon.

Although Fallon and Fessler didn't place, they still enjoyed going to the tournament and watching the different matches.

"It did not go as we had planned but at the end of the day I was just really glad I got to be at the tournament with her," said Fessler.

Mia Gabelev is a first time qualifier for the state tournament. She was the only one of six players who hadn't been qualified for state before.

"I won my first match, which was a tough one, but I lost my next two," stated Gabelev.

The team is proud of its successful 2019 season. Going to sectionals and having all six girls qualify isn't easy, but winning state will be even more challenging.

"I think our team did really well this season," concluded Gabelev. "We have a talented group of girls that care about the game. We're really going to miss our seniors because they are so vital to our team and experience."